

****ATTENTION****

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Field care of game



FACTSHEET

There are several ways to field dress a big game animal, but the basics are the same--the animal should be bled, tagged, the chest and abdominal cavity opened, and the entrails removed, the carcass cooled and the meat kept clean.

Here's a neat, efficient way to clean a deer or elk:

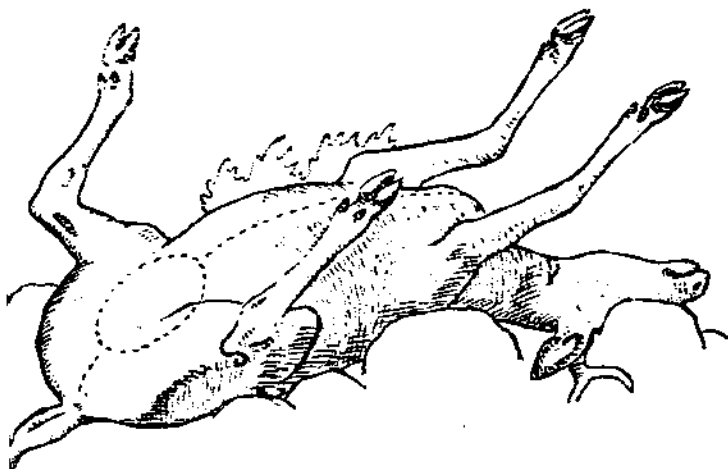
- 1) Make sure the animal is dead.
- 2) If you are going to bleed the animal, do it immediately. Most animals bleed out internally, especially if they are shot through the body. If you don't plan to dress the animal right away, always bleed and drain it as soon as possible.

If you plan to save the cape and head for mounting, stick the animal with your knife where the throat meets the top of the breast bone, cutting parallel to the throat, rather than across it.

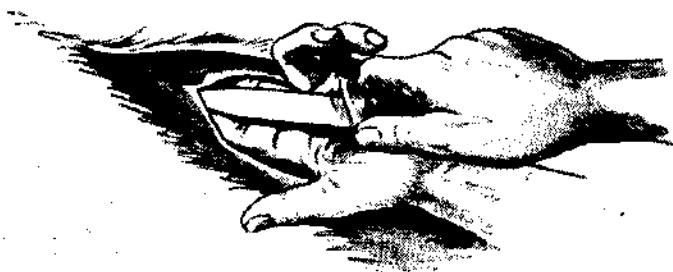


- 3) Tag the animal. Cut and remove the notches on the game tag showing the month and date of kill. The tag can be tied anywhere on the animal. But by cutting a hole in the ear, tying the tag to it, folding the ear closed and tying it shut, you'll have less chance of losing the tag while transporting the deer.

4) If you're on a hillside, cleaning will be easier if you point the animal's head downhill. Be careful while dressing the animal not to contaminate the meat with dirt, hair or musk from the scent glands. Keep your hands and knife free of hair and do not touch the glands, which are inside the hind legs, near the joint.



Open the animal from the crotch to the base of the breast bone, taking care not to cut into the internal organs. Don't jab with the knife--make a short cut through the skin and the underlying layer of muscle tissue. Slide your fingers under the hide and muscle layer and hold these up and away from the entrails as you continue the cut from the crotch to the base of the breast bone.

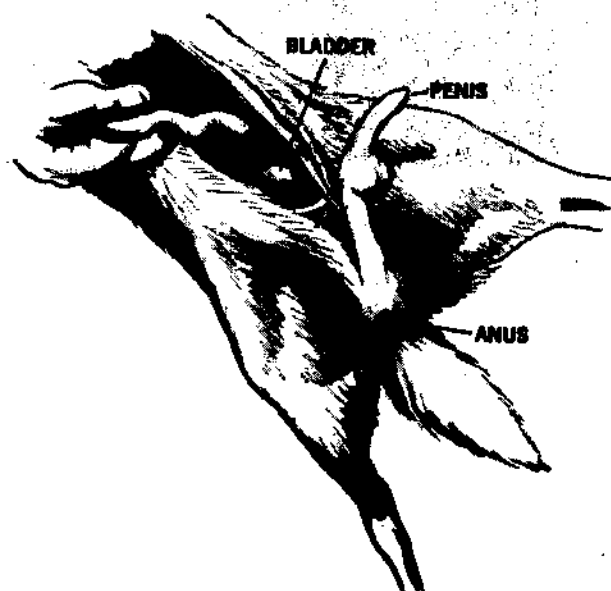


(Some persons may prefer to slit open the skin and peel it back before cutting through the muscle layer separately. This may make it easier to keep hair away from the meat.)

With a male, cut the skin around the genitals, which are then pulled down away from the body. The genitals may be removed now or later. With a female, remove the udder.

5) Pull the viscera out of the body cavity. To do so, you will have to cut the tissue that ties the organs to the inside body wall and reach inside the chest cavity to sever the windpipe and gullet. You will be left with only the small intestine attached. Cut through the small intestine--be careful not to spill its contents on the meat--and tie off the end remaining in the body.

You don't have to split the pelvis, but doing so makes it easier to clean the animal. Cut right through the center of the bone itself, along the suture line, where the two halves are joined. Slice through the bone, don't chisel.



Pull the remaining part of the intestine out through the opened pelvis. Cut free all around the anal opening and sweep out the excess blood. If the genitals were not removed earlier, they can be cut away now with the intestine.

7) The liver and heart are still attached in the chest cavity. These will come loose with only a little cutting, but be careful not to get them dirty. Both organs are good eating, and you don't have to age them. Fried or baked these parts make a fine camp dinner. Some hunters carry plastic sacks in which to carry the heart and liver; but don't keep them in the sacks too long without cooling or the meat may spoil. The body cavity should now be empty, and all the entrails removed.

By now, more blood will have accumulated in the cavity. Gently lift the carcass to drain it out.

8) Everything that could cause the meat to spoil has been removed except the windpipe. Make a cut the length of the throat, grasp the windpipe and pull it loose.

Inspect for blood-shot meat as you go along and cut it away where you find it; otherwise, it will cause the parts around it to sour rapidly.

The musk glands on the hind legs contain a strong scent that can taint the meat. You may cut them off or leave them on the hide. In either case, don't handle them or touch them with your knife.

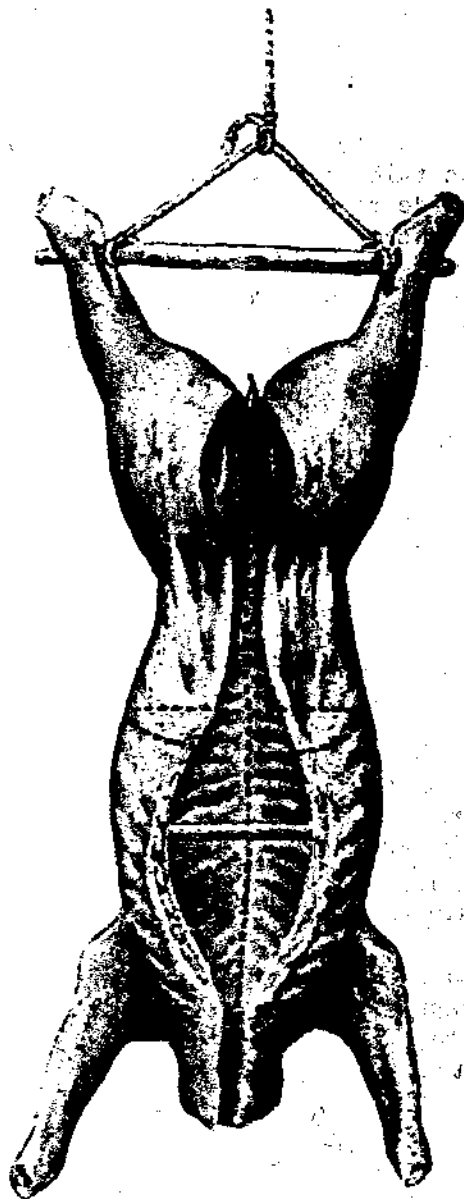
9) Removing the lower leg bones will make it easier to transport the carcass. Cut the legs off at the joints.

10) How you carry the animal out of the woods to your camp or car depends on how heavy the animal is, the type of terrain and how far you have to go. If you must walk a long distance, you may choose to bone-out the meat, wrap the pieces in clean cloth or bags and backpack it out. On the other hand, you may want to quarter the animal, or, if you feel strong enough and don't have far to go, you may carry it out whole.

In any case, when you are carrying an animal or part of one with the hide attached, mark it brightly so other hunters will not mistake it for a moving animal as you carry it through the woods.

11) When you get the animal out of the woods the next step is to provide for rapid cooling. With a large animal, like an elk, you should get the hide off as soon as possible, because the hide will hold body heat and may sour the meat. If you have a deer and don't have far to carry it, you can leave the hide on until you bring it out of the woods, since this will keep the meat cleaner. But as soon as you can get to camp, skin the animal completely.

To help cool the carcass, you should cut open the chest cavity. This can be



done with a knife, but an axe or saw will make the job easier. Spread the ribs and prop the chest cavity open with a stick.

12) If water is available, wash the carcass. All remaining blood-shot sections should be trimmed away, and the meat covered completely with a game bag or other porous-cloth wrap.

13) Let the carcass cool thoroughly (six hours) in good ventilation before transporting. Transport game only on a cool, ventilated part of carrier.

Unless you are well-experienced at cutting meat, turn your game animal over to a local butcher for cutting, wrapping and quick freezing for the locker.

If you do the work yourself and wrap the meat at home for a freezer, wrap each portion twice in locker paper with the waxed side toward the meat. When you freeze large quantities of meat, spread the packages thinly in the locker or freezer, placing successive layers at intervals of several hours. This will allow the meat to freeze quickly and thoroughly. The meat's quality will suffer if too much is stored at one time. Packages at the center of several stored layers do not freeze quickly and their texture is not as good as those frozen more promptly.

Arrange your locker or freezer so you can withdraw packages without difficulty. Check the condition of the meat from time to time, especially if it has a time limit by law. Or prepare a list of locker deposits and remove pieces before they lose flavor and quality.

Deer and elk fat may taste bad 60 to 90 days after they are stored, but they may again become palatable after six months. Use first the meat that is streaked with fat. Place it forward in the locker or freezer for easy access. Steaks that are heavily rimmed with fat will taste good even if they exceed the storage limit if you carefully remove all fat before frying. Lean meat can be held as long as six months. There may be some evaporation and loss of flavor, but it will still be palatable.

Before cutting up the carcass, wash it down thoroughly with a solution of one pint of vinegar to three gallons of water.

